

# STANLEY BOYD



## YOUTH BASEBALL CATCHING DRILLS REFERENCE GUIDE 2026

8U • 10U • 12U • 14U

Station substitution drills for use in practice plans

| 8U                             | 10U                            | 12U                          | 14U                               |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>7 Drills</b>                | <b>8 Drills</b>                | <b>9 Drills</b>              | <b>10 Drills</b>                  |
| Gear comfort & basic receiving | Receiving & pop-up throw intro | Framing, blocking & pop time | Elite receiving & game management |

*Use these drills to substitute into any hitting or defensive station slot as needed.*



# 8U YOUTH BASEBALL CATCHING DRILLS

## Station Substitution Guide

Youth Baseball Practice Plans

Focus: Gear comfort, basic receiving, and making catching fun









### LEVEL-WIDE COACHING POINTS


- ✓ Getting comfortable in the gear is the first priority — many 8U kids have never worn a chest protector or shin guards before.
- ✓ Never criticize a missed block or passed ball at this age. Build confidence and love for the position first.
- ✓ Keep catcher sessions short — the squat position is physically demanding for young players. Rotate catchers frequently.
- ✓ Teach the two basic stances: relaxed stance (no pitcher on the mound) and active stance (pitcher is set). Keep it simple.
- ✓ Celebrate every catch, every block attempt, and every throw — effort is everything at this age.



### DRILLS (7 total) — Each drill fits within a single 9-minute station slot

| # | Drill Name                           | Setup & Execution  | Key Coaching Cues  | Equipment Needed             |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Gear Up &amp; Get Comfortable</b> | Walk players through putting on every piece of gear correctly: shin guards (inside pad faces in), chest protector (buckles in back), helmet, and mitt. Have them jog lightly and do jumping jacks in full gear. Removes the intimidation factor.                     | Gear should fit snugly — not too loose or too tight. Shin guards should cover the knee cap. Helmet must be worn on every pitch. If a player is uncomfortable in their gear, they cannot focus on catching. Comfort first.          | Baseballs                    |
| 2 | <b>Basic Squat Stance</b>            | No pitcher, no ball. Players practice getting into the catching stance: feet slightly wider than shoulder-width, weight on the balls of the feet, knees out, glove open and out front, throwing hand behind the back. Hold for 10 seconds, stand up, repeat 8 times. | Butt down, not sitting on the heels. Weight on the balls of the feet — not the heels. Throwing hand hides behind the back to protect fingers. Glove open and in front of the body, not between the legs.                           | Baseballs                    |
| 3 | <b>Two-Hand Receiving</b>            | Coach kneels 10 ft in front of the catcher and tosses easy lobs. Catcher receives each pitch with two hands — glove catches, bare hand covers on top to secure the ball. 10 tosses each, mixing locations slightly.  | Catch the ball in the pocket of the glove, not the palm. Bare hand comes over immediately after the catch to secure it. Do not reach out for the ball — let it come to the glove. Soft hands — absorb the ball, do not slap at it. | Catcher's Gear,<br>Baseballs |
| 4 | <b>Glove Presentation Drill</b>      | Coach calls a zone: 'high,' 'low,' 'inside,' 'outside.' Catcher moves their glove to that spot and holds it there for 2 seconds before the coach tosses. Receive the ball and hold the glove still for 1 second after the catch. Repeat 10 times.                    | Move the glove before the ball gets there — not after. Hold still after the catch — do not pull the glove away immediately. This is the beginning of framing: presenting the pitch for the umpire.                                 | Catcher's Gear,<br>Baseballs |

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|---|--|---|--|--|
| 5 | <b>Basic Blocking — Body in Front</b>    | Coach rolls or bounces a ball in the dirt directly in front of the catcher. Catcher drops to both knees, chin tucks to chest, glove drops between the legs to fill the gap, and the body funnels the ball in front. No throwing — just block and smother. | The goal is not to catch the ball — it is to keep it in front of you. Drop straight down, do not lunge forward. Chin to chest protects the throat. The ball should hit the chest protector and drop in front of the body.          |  Catcher's Gear,<br> Baseballs |
| 6 | <b>Pop Up &amp; Throw to the Pitcher</b> | Coach tosses a ball to the catcher from 10 ft. Catcher catches it, stands up, and throws it back to the coach or pitcher. Focus on standing up cleanly and making a simple, accurate throw — no complicated footwork yet.                                 | Stand up before you throw — do not throw from the squat. Take one step toward your target before releasing. Throw at chest height. This is the foundation for the more advanced pop-up throw drill in later levels.                |  Catcher's Gear,<br> Baseballs |
| 7 | <b>Roll-Out Blocking Drill</b>           | Coach rolls balls to the catcher's left and right from 10 ft. Catcher drops a knee toward the direction of the ball, moves their body in front of it, and blocks. Alternate left and right. 10 reps each side.  | Move the body, not just the glove. The knee closest to the ball drops first — this angles the body to funnel the ball to the center. Glove drops between the legs to fill the gap at the bottom. Body stays square to the pitcher. |  Catcher's Gear,<br> Baseballs |

 **Station Tip:** Substitute any of these drills into a hitting or defensive station slot. Rotate 3–4 players through the pitching station at a time while others continue at standard stations.



# 10U YOUTH BASEBALL CATCHING DRILLS

## Station Substitution Guide

Youth Baseball Practice Plans

Focus: Receiving consistency, directional blocking, and introducing the pop-up throw











### LEVEL-WIDE COACHING POINTS


- ✓ Receiving is a skill, not just catching. Teach catchers to receive every pitch with quiet, soft hands and minimal glove movement.
- ✓ Blocking mechanics should be drilled until they are automatic — a catcher who thinks about their blocking technique is already too slow.
- ✓ Introduce the pop-up throw to second base. Footwork matters more than arm strength at this stage.
- ✓ Communication behind the plate starts here: catchers should talk to their pitcher, infielders, and coaches every inning.
- ✓ Emphasize the value of the position — the catcher sees the whole field and is the most important defensive player on the team.



### DRILLS (8 total) — Each drill fits within a single 9-minute station slot

| # | Drill Name  | Setup & Execution   | Key Coaching Cues  | Equipment Needed             |
|---|---|---|--|------------------------------|
| 1 | <b>Stance Progression — Relaxed to Active</b>     | Catcher practices transitioning between two stances on command. Relaxed stance (no runners on, pitcher not set): weight back, one knee slightly higher, signal with glove. Active stance (runner on, pitcher set): weight forward, both feet ready, hands live. Coach calls 'relax' or 'active' randomly. | The relaxed stance is a rest position — but the catcher must snap into the active stance instantly when needed. Active stance: weight on the balls of the feet, low center of gravity, ready to block or throw at any moment.                | Catcher's Gear,<br>Baseballs |
| 2 | <b>Soft Hands Receiving Drill</b>                 | Coach front-tosses to all areas of the strike zone at moderate speed. Catcher focuses on receiving each pitch with a 'give' — the glove moves slightly backward with the ball at contact to absorb the force. 15 pitches across all zones.  | The glove should not pop or slap. A loud pop = hard hands. Quiet catch = soft hands. Think of catching an egg — you give with the catch. Soft hands make borderline pitches look like strikes.   | Catcher's Gear,<br>Baseballs |
| 3 | <b>Directional Blocking — Left, Middle, Right</b> | Coach throws balls in the dirt to three locations: directly in front, to the left, and to the right. Middle: drop straight down. Left: drop left knee, angle body right to funnel ball to center. Right: drop right knee, angle body left. 5 reps at each location.                                       | On a middle block, drop straight down — both knees hit simultaneously. On a side block, the near knee drops first and the body angles inward. The goal every time: keep the ball in front and centered. Balls that kick sideways score runs. | Baseballs                    |
| 4 | <b>Pop-Up Throw Footwork Drill</b>                | No throw yet — just footwork. Ball is tossed to the catcher. They catch it, explode out of the squat using a small hop, and land with feet in a throwing position: right foot slightly back, body facing second base. Hold that position for 2 seconds. 10 reps.  | The hop out of the squat is what generates momentum toward second base. Land with feet shoulder-width, right foot back, weight transfers forward into the throw. This footwork must be automatic before the throw is added.                  | Catcher's Gear,<br>Baseballs |

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| 5 | <b>Pop-Up Throw to Second</b>                | Add the throw to the previous drill. Catcher receives a pitch, executes the hop footwork, and throws to second base. SS or 2B covers. Focus: throw at knee-to-belt height on a line — not a rainbow arc. 10 throws, track accuracy.                                     | Quick release — the time from receive to throw should feel explosive, not slow. Aim for the chest of the fielder covering second. A throw that bounces at second is better than one that sails high. Stay low through the throw.                             |  Catcher's Gear,<br> Baseballs |
| 6 | <b>Ball in the Dirt — Reaction Drill</b>     | Coach throws 10 pitches to the catcher from the mound — mix of strikes and intentional balls in the dirt with no verbal cue. Catcher must react: receive a strike, block a ball in the dirt. No looking at the coach for signals — read the pitch and react.            | Catchers must learn to read pitch trajectory early — not when the ball is already at their feet. Watch the release point and ball spin. If the ball is going in the dirt, the catcher must commit to the block early — not react late.                       |  Catcher's Gear,<br> Baseballs |
| 7 | <b>Framing Progression</b>                   | Coach tosses borderline pitches — balls just off the corners of the plate. Catcher presents the glove at the spot, catches with a quiet glove, and holds still for 1 full second after the catch. No pulling, no twisting. Coach evaluates: does it look like a strike? | Framing is not cheating — it is presenting the pitch honestly and quietly. Do not stab at the pitch or pull it dramatically. The glove arrives first, the ball comes to the glove. A quiet, still glove after the catch is the most important framing skill. |  Catcher's Gear,<br> Baseballs |
| 8 | <b>Communication Drill — Call Every Play</b> | During any live or simulated defensive rep, the catcher must verbally communicate on every pitch: call the base to throw to, tell fielders where the play is, remind the pitcher of the count. If the catcher is silent for two pitches in a row, the drill stops.      | The catcher is the quarterback of the defense. They see everything. Communicating is not optional — it is their most important responsibility. Simple phrases: 'One out, play at second,' 'No runners, take your time,' 'Back him up!'                       |  Catcher's Gear,<br> Baseballs |

 **Station Tip:** Substitute any of these drills into a hitting or defensive station slot. Rotate 3–4 players through the pitching station at a time while others continue at standard stations.



# 12U YOUTH BASEBALL CATCHING DRILLS

Focus: Advanced blocking, framing technique, pop time improvement, and calling a game

## Station Substitution Guide













Youth Baseball Practice Plans


### LEVEL-WIDE COACHING POINTS

- ✓ Pop time is now measurable and important. Target under 2.1 seconds from catch to second base catch. Track it every session.
- ✓ Framing is a legitimate skill that earns or loses strikes — catchers who frame well directly impact their pitcher's success.
- ✓ Catchers should know every hitter's tendencies and help their pitcher execute a game plan. Introduce pitch calling at this level.
- ✓ Blocking must be practiced on live pitches — not just coach tosses. The speed and movement of a real pitch requires trained reactions.
- ✓ One-handed receiving on pitches away from the body reduces injury risk and improves glove control. Teach it deliberately.

### DRILLS (9 total) — Each drill fits within a single 9-minute station slot

| # | Drill Name  | Setup & Execution  | Key Coaching Cues   | Equipment Needed                          |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | <b>One-Handed Receiving Drill</b>                         | Coach tosses pitches at moderate speed to the outer edges of the zone. Catcher receives pitches in the outer third with one hand — glove only, throwing hand behind the back. Inside pitches: two-handed. Outside pitches: one-handed. 15 pitches, alternate.                | One-handed receiving on outside pitches prevents foul tips from hitting the throwing hand. The glove should funnel the ball in — no stabbing motion. Keep the elbow relaxed so the glove can adjust. Throwing hand only comes in when the ball is in the glove. | Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs                |
| 2 | <b>Advanced Framing — Edge Pitches</b>                    | Coach throws 15 pitches specifically targeting the edges of the strike zone — just off the corners or just above/below. Catcher works on presenting each pitch: arrive at the spot before the ball, catch quietly, hold still for a full second. Video one round for review. | Elite framing is about location of the glove before the ball arrives and stillness after. Moving toward the strike zone = pulling a ball. Catchers who are rated by scouts for framing get drafted for it. It is a real, valuable skill.                        | Tablet/Phone,  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs |
| 3 | <b>Full Blocking Sequence — Wild Pitch &amp; Recovery</b> | Coach throws a ball in the dirt. Catcher blocks, smothers the ball, springs back to their feet, and immediately throws to first base (or covers home on a passed ball scenario). Full sequence from block to recovery throw. 10 reps.  | After the block, get up fast — a runner is going. Smother the ball with the glove, scoop, and fire. On a passed ball with a runner going home: block, spin, find the ball, cover the plate. Every block drill should end with a recovery action.                | Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs                |

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| 4 | <b>Pop Time Benchmark Drill</b>            | Coach times 5 consecutive pop-up throws to second base with a stopwatch. Measure from the pop of the mitt to the pop of the fielder's glove at second. Record the average. Target: under 2.1 seconds. Repeat weekly and track improvement.   | Pop time has two components: exchange time (catch to release) and arm strength. Most improvement comes from the exchange — being quicker out of the squat and releasing faster. Technique beats raw arm strength. Track both the time and the accuracy of the throw.        |  Tablet/Phone,  Stopwatch,  Baseballs<br>Baseballs |
| 5 | <b>Pitch Calling Introduction</b>          | During a bullpen session, the catcher calls every pitch — no coach input. They give signals, set up in the correct location, and communicate with the pitcher. After the bullpen, coach debriefs: 'Why did you call that sequence? What were you trying to set up?'                    | Pitch calling is a skill that must be practiced, not just explained. Teach basic sequencing: fastball to establish zone, change speeds, expand the zone with two strikes. A 12U catcher who can call a thoughtful game is years ahead of their peers.                       |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |
| 6 | <b>Glove-Side Blocking Progression</b>     | 5 blocks to the right (glove side), 5 to the left (throwing side), 5 in the middle. Each block ends with the catcher finding the ball and performing a simulated quick throw to first. Grade each block: 1 pt if ball stays in front, 0 if it kicks away.                              | The glove side is typically the harder block because the body has to rotate differently. On a glove-side block, the right knee plants and the body rotates left — the opposite of what feels natural. Drill it more than the throwing side until both sides are equal.      |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |
| 7 | <b>Pitcher-Catcher Communication Drill</b> | Pitcher is on the mound. Before each pitch, the catcher gives verbal and visual information: the pitch call (signal), the location target (hold glove in spot), and after the pitch, a simple verbal reset ('Good, let's go' or 'Shake it off'). Run a full 15-pitch bullpen this way. | A catcher who communicates well makes their pitcher better. Visit the mound when a pitcher is struggling — not to fix mechanics, but to reset their mindset. Cue: 'You are my pitcher's best coach. They trust you more than they trust me when the game is on the line.'   |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |
| 8 | <b>Tag Play at Home Plate</b>              | Runner comes from third on a passed ball or squeeze play. Catcher receives the throw (or smothers the block), spins to the baseline, applies the tag low to the ground — glove down, sweep tag. Do not reach up into the runner. 10 tag reps from various throw angles.                | Tag the runner's foot or ankle — the lowest part of their body. Sweep tag: swipe down and across, do not hold the glove in the runner's path (injury risk). Hold the ball firmly — runners try to knock it loose. Left foot blocks the plate, right foot in fair territory. |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |
| 9 | <b>Pickoff to First Base</b>               | Catcher receives a pitch, then executes a snap throw to first base to pick off a runner. Right-handed catcher: step right, pop the hip, throw. Practice with a first baseman holding the position. 8 reps from both the windup and the stretch position.                               | The pickoff to first is an underused weapon. Quick release and accuracy are more important than velocity. Step toward first with the right foot, drive the elbow, throw on a line at the inside of the bag. Call the play with the first baseman before the pitch.          |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |

 **Station Tip:** Substitute any of these drills into a hitting or defensive station slot. Rotate 3–4 players through the pitching station at a time while others continue at standard stations.



# 14U YOUTH BASEBALL CATCHING DRILLS

## Station Substitution Guide

Youth Baseball Practice Plans

Focus: Elite receiving, game management, advanced blocking, and leadership behind the plate

















### LEVEL-WIDE COACHING POINTS


- ✓ At 14U, the catcher is the on-field coach. They must know the count, the outs, the baserunners, and every hitter's weakness at all times.
- ✓ Pop time under 1.9 seconds is the target. This is achievable with elite exchange technique and does not require an extraordinary arm.
- ✓ Advanced framing — receiving balls off the plate and presenting them as strikes — is a real, measurable skill that scouts track at this level.
- ✓ Game management: pitch sequencing, working the count, setting up hitters, and managing a pitcher's emotions are all catcher responsibilities.
- ✓ Catchers take the most physical punishment on the field. Teach proper body maintenance: ice after games, stretching hip flexors, and mandatory arm care.



### DRILLS (10 total) — Each drill fits within a single 9-minute station slot

| # | Drill Name  | Setup & Execution  | Key Coaching Cues   | Equipment Needed  |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| 1 | <b>Arm Care &amp; Mobility Routine</b>            | Mandatory pre-session routine: band external rotation (3x10), band scarecrows (3x10), hip flexor stretches (hold 30 sec each side), thoracic rotation stretches, and wrist circles. No catcher reps until this is complete.  | Catchers squat thousands of times per season and throw hundreds of high-effort throws. Hip flexors and the throwing shoulder are the most at-risk areas. This routine is not optional — it is what allows a catcher to stay healthy and play every day.       | Resistance Bands,  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs           |
| 2 | <b>Elite Framing — Off-the-Plate Presentation</b> | Coach throws pitches 2–4 inches off all four corners of the plate. Catcher works on catching them with a completely still glove — arriving early, catching quietly, holding for a full second. Video the session and review with the catcher. Grade: does it look like a strike on camera? | Research shows that elite framers earn their team an extra 1–2 strikes per inning. Over a full game that is 5–15 extra strikes. That directly changes outcomes. The skill: be early, be still, be quiet. A dramatic glove pull will never fool an umpire.     | Tablet/Phone,  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs               |
| 3 | <b>Exchange Speed Drill</b>                       | Ball placed on a tee or in the catcher's glove. On the coach's signal, the catcher performs the exchange — ball from glove to throwing grip — as fast as possible. Time it with a stopwatch. Goal: under 0.7 seconds for the exchange alone. 10 reps, rest, 10 more.                       | The exchange is the part of pop time most catchers ignore — and it is where the most time is lost. The ball should be transferred to the throwing hand before the catcher fully rises out of the squat. Practice the hand speed independently from the throw. | Stopwatch,  Batting Tee(s),  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs |

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| 4  | <b>Pop Time Full Sequence — Benchmark</b>   | 5 full pop-up throws to second base, timed from mitt pop to fielder's glove. Target: under 1.9 seconds. Record every session. Break the time into two parts: exchange time (catch to release) and flight time. Identify which component needs improvement.   | A 1.9-second pop time is elite at 14U. Most base stealers are thrown out below 2.0 seconds. If the flight time is already fast, work the exchange. If the exchange is fast but the throw is off-line, work accuracy. Never sacrifice accuracy for speed.  |  Tablet/Phone,  Stopwatch,  Baseballs<br>Baseballs |
| 5  | <b>Advanced Blocking — Live Pitching</b>    | Catcher blocks 15 live pitches in the dirt thrown by a pitcher at full or near-full effort. No pre-announced locations — catcher must read and react. After each block, catcher recovers and simulates a throw to either first or second based on coach's call.  | This is the most game-realistic blocking drill. Reaction time must be trained on real pitch movement and velocity — not just soft coach tosses. Catchers who can block live pitching confidently never get crossed up. Every block ends with a recovery and a decision.                                 |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |
| 6  | <b>Pitch Sequencing Game Plan</b>           | Before a bullpen session, coach gives the catcher a scouting report on an imaginary hitter (e.g., 'pull hitter, struggles with low and away, chases breaking balls in the dirt'). Catcher calls the entire bullpen based on that report. Debrief after: did the sequence make sense?                   | Game-calling is the highest-level catcher skill. Teach the framework: establish the fastball, change eye levels, attack the weakness, expand the zone with two strikes. A catcher who can execute a plan against a specific hitter is a game-changing asset.  |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |
| 7  | <b>Mound Visit Protocol</b>                 | During live or simulated pitching, when the pitcher throws two consecutive balls or struggles, the catcher calls timeout and visits the mound. Practice the mound visit: calm walk, give the pitcher time to breathe, deliver one specific message, and return. No extended conversations.             | The best mound visits are short and positive. Never go to the mound to coach mechanics — that is not your job in the game. Your job: reset the pitcher's mindset. Phrases: 'You're fine, let's attack,' 'Trust your fastball,' 'We've got you.' Positive and simple.                                    |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |
| 8  | <b>Stolen Base + Wild Pitch Combination</b> | Runner on first gets a steal read. Coach simultaneously throws a ball in the dirt to the catcher. Catcher blocks the pitch, recovers, and still attempts a throw to second. Simulates the hardest possible catch-and-throw situation. 8 reps.  | This is the worst-case scenario — and it happens in real games. The block always comes first. A ball that kicks away with a runner going is a disaster. Block it, find it, then throw. A delayed accurate throw beats an immediate wild throw.  |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |
| 9  | <b>Foul Tip &amp; Pop Foul Drill</b>        | Coach tosses pop fouls at various angles — behind the plate, toward the screen, toward both dugouts. Catcher rips off the mask, tosses it away from the ball's path, locates the ball, and catches it. 10 reps at different angles.  | Mask goes off immediately and gets tossed away — never dropped straight down (you will trip on it). Spin to face the infield first — this is where most pop fouls come down. Find the ball early and get under it. If you cannot get there, let it drop — do not dive into a wall.                      |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |
| 10 | <b>Full Game-Speed Defensive Session</b>    | Catcher runs a complete simulated inning: live pitcher, baserunners, full defensive communication. Catcher calls pitches, communicates on every play, blocks all balls in the dirt, executes pop throws on steal attempts, calls the mound visit if needed, and directs the defense after every pitch. | This is the 14U capstone drill. The catcher is fully responsible for running the defense. No coaching during the inning. After the inning, catcher gives the self-debrief first: 'What did I do well? What decision would I change?' This builds the self-coaching ability that defines elite catchers. |  Catcher's Gear,  Baseballs   |

 **Station Tip:** Substitute any of these drills into a hitting or defensive station slot. Rotate 3–4 players through the pitching station at a time while others continue at standard stations.